India Millenium (Fund) Scheme of UTI

3779. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Unit Trust of India has initiated an India Millenium (Fund) Scheme under which Indian Bonds are to be issued to Indians abroad;

(b) if so, the main terms of the India Bonds and whether the bonds are denominated in foreign currencies; and

(c) how far the scheme has been subscribed so far and the amount of foreign exchange collected and sought to be collected under the scheme?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) Unit Trust of India has informed that the Scheme is under formulation.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Funds of Indians in Tax-Haven countries

3780. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that huge funds to the extent of $100 billion of Indian Industrialists, Politicians and Officials is lying in various tax-haven countries;

(b) whether Government have ever made any assessment about the quantum of such funds in various countries and if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether Government propose to give another amnesty to the depositors in order to channelise the amount for infrastructure activities in India and if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor and what steps Government propose to get that amount in India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI R. JANARTHANAM): (a) and (b) Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has granted permission to Indian citizens to maintain and operate bank accounts abroad in certain cases. Since there is no mechanism for monitoring transactions in such accounts, it is not possible to ascertain the quantum of funds held in these accounts.

(c) At present, there is no proposal to grant amnesty to persons having bank accounts abroad. Appropriate action under Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, 1973 (FERA) is taken on receipt of a specific report of maintenance/operation of bank accounts abroad by persons resident in India.

Pre-Budget/Post-Budget prices of Onion/Potatoes

3781. SARDAR GURCHARAN SINGH TOHRA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been sharp rise in the prices of some essential commodities like vegetables, pulses especially onions and potatoes etc. after the presentation of the Union Budget.

(b) if so, the reasons thereof indicating the pre-budget and post-budget prices of onions and potatoes; and

(c) the steps Government have taken to check the price rise so far and with what results?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) and (b) Out of 30 essential items of daily consumption whose prices are monitored regularly on weekly basis, sharp rise in the prices since March 1998 was registered only in five item—namely, arhar, potato, onion, rapeseed/mustard oil, groundnut oil and gur. Prices of the remaining essential consumer items have increased only marginally or even declined. Prices of essential items of daily consumption which are seasonally produced are infulenced by the outcome of their production. In Rabi 1997-98, a prolonged wet spell and later excessive hot spell, caused sharp decline in the production of onion, potato, oilseeds, pulses and a number of other seasonal fruits and vegetables. Thus sharp decline in output